

# Frostbiting Heats Up in Duxbury Bay

By SALLY AUSTIN-RUNCI

If you think that frostbiting in Duxbury Bay is a thing of the past, take a closer look. For the second year in a row, the Scituate Frostbite Association is holding its weekly races in Duxbury, launching from the Duxbury Bay Maritime School campus.

It was toward the end of the 80's that the Duxbury Frostbite Society dissolved after roughly 30 years of sailing Interclubs (IC's) on Sunday afternoons from November to March. In contrast, the SFA has held together and continues to draw top-notch sailors from the region to compete in the weekly Sunday afternoon races. Almost 50 years after it began in 1957 SFA is still going strong and recruiting new members.

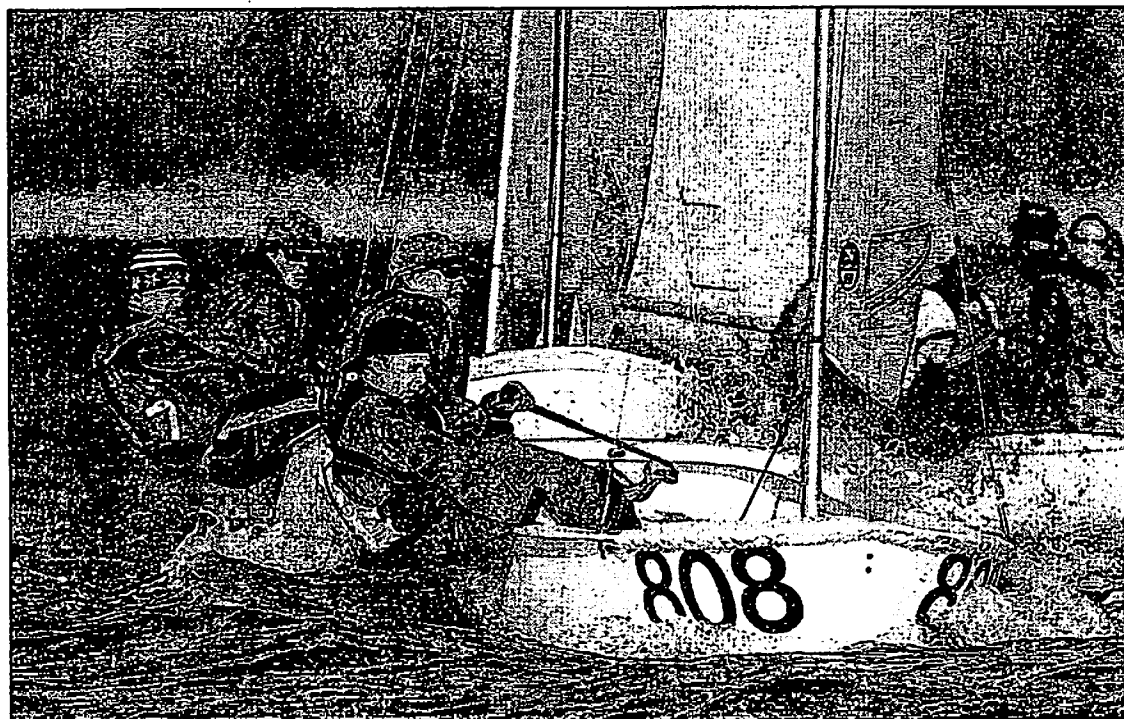
Fran Charles has had ties to both organizations beginning with SFA when, at age 7, he crewed for his father, the late

Fran Charles Sr. After college, Charles joined the Duxbury Frostbite Society, sailing with them during the 80s until its demise. An active member of the SFA, Charles wants to see more participation each week and is encouraging sailors to come and give it a try.

Unfortunately, the name "frostbiting" conjures up something less than a warm and inviting feeling, working against the SFA's goal of attracting new members.

Last winter was extremely cold, and for six weeks the Interclubs remained in the parking lot frozen to their trailers. When the deep freeze subsided and water was visible in the bay, sailing was abandoned for the sixth Sunday in a row as car-sized blocks of ice piled up on the boat ramp prohibiting access to the bay.

January and February are the coldest months in Duxbury, but information on



Steve Kirkpatrick and Chris Fagan plow through the cold water of Duxbury Bay. Kirkpatrick was the 2004 US Men's Single-Handed Champion in the Laser class.

*Photos by David Grossman/www.gurnetroad.com*



SFA member Joe Berkley and crew Andrew Flynn look for the first mark.

the SFA website shows that the average temperature during their 2002-03 season was 50 degrees, slightly warmer than the average of 46 degrees in 2001-02. So while the name may give sailors bragging rights, the weather conditions that they brave are often anything but frosty.

At the height of the Duxbury Frostbite Society's activity, its members operated out of a shed in the town parking lot. The sailors wore wool for warmth and enjoyed liquid refreshments that thinned their blood and guaranteed that they would not freeze. Times have changed, and with polar fleece and polypropylene, it is possible to "frostbite" and not freeze. Like preparing for a cold day of skiing, frostbiters dress in layers and then top off with a drysuit and life vest.

The frostbiting scene continues to be social, but with a new twist: a babysitter is on

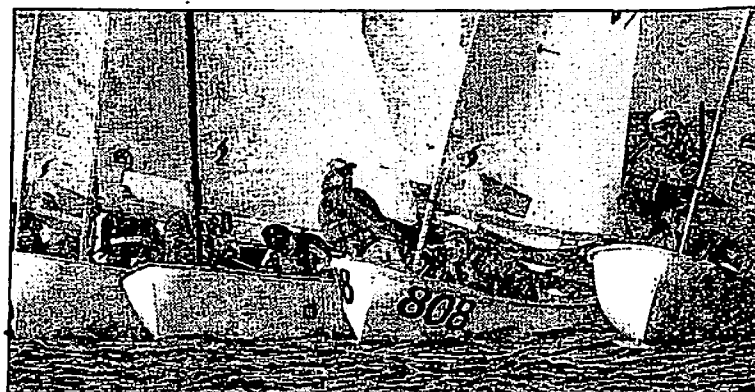
the premises to watch children while parents sail. Some traditions never die though, and what returns year after year is good competition on the water followed by racers sharing stories of their successes and failures for the day. And, yes, those silly little bathtubs boats are just as they were in 1946.

If you are an ex-frostbiter (or share a garage with one) and have an Interclub buried in your garage, the time has come for you to either get out

there sailing, or to pass the boat along to the next generation of sailors.

Show up at DBMS Sunday afternoon and discuss your options with SFA members. If you are not up to joining in for a sail, then come and watch. See if frostbiting can "float your boat" this year.

Inquiries about the SFA are encouraged and should be directed to Ed Mills, Fleet Captain, at [ed\\_mills@comcast.net](mailto:ed_mills@comcast.net) or (781) 740-2661.



SFA's Steve Kirkpatrick (#808) moves ahead of the pack that includes Beverly and Alan Bruce on right.